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THE BROKEN STATUE

de FONTANGE.

A DRAMATIC DAY

BY

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PREFACE.

One rainy afternoon, when I was in my fourteenth year, I was reading an old volume of Leslie's Weekly, and I came across an article on the cyclonic career of the Duchess de Fontange. Its tragic facts stirred me to action. I went to the library to get what further material I could on her life. After I had read the few volumes obtainable, I wrote two pedantic scenes, which amused some of my friends so much that I decided to start over again the preparatory work of my drama. This time I thought that I must learn how the stage people of the Louis XIV period talked. So I read a few dramas by Moliere, Racine, Corveille. I read Shakespeare, also, at this time. These master minds did not discourage me, and, with childish confidence, I retained the idea that I would produce a real drama before long.

Eleven years have gone. I have hoped; I have persevered; I have learned. What have I now to offer in this dramatic day which came to me in rough sort of rhythm? A good effort, I hope, done in the right spirit. If any line is worthy, then a power, which I would should direct me, spoke.

Dayton, Virginia, November, 1909.

"Love is whole
And true; if sure of naught beside, most sure
Of its own truth at last; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below."

Browning: Sordello. I. 730.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARIE ANGELIQUE DE FONTANGE, Duchess, a loving woman of eighteen years.

SISTER FELICE.

SISTER LAURA.

SISTER CELESTE, once la Valiere, mistress of Louis XIV

NOVICE HELEN.

FATHER AMBROSE.

LOUIS XIV.

SCENE: *A Convent near Paris.*

ACT FIRST.

SCENE I.—*A chamber in a Convent near Paris.*
TIME:—*The Latter part of the reign of Louis XIV.*
FATHER AMBROSE AND MARIE ANGELIQUE DE FONTANGE.

AMBROSE. Dost thou not crave forgiveness now, my child?
Dost thou not seek the loving intercession
Of the sweet Mother of Our Sacred Lord?
Was not the cross He bore, the thorny crown,
Enough to make thee trust in his great love?
Thou dost not feel that He will hear thy voice.
We are all too unworthy to pray to Him.
Blest Mary will intercede for thee, but ask,—
One prayer, and only give thyself to the prayer,
Mary will pity thee, and ask her Lord
That thy soul may be saved.

MARIE. Shall I be saved

If I surrender all, and sink myself
In prayer ? But how can I surrender ?
There is nothing in myself which is my own.
Love came to me, and I gave all to love;
Or love, Promethus-like, filched my heart,
My soul, my spirit, all I was, it grasped;
And it doth own me. Do you know my king ?
Louis, the great noble soul of the whole world ?
Oh ! do you know him ? Then I say I love him;
And it was he who made the bud of love
Burst the first moment that he looked on it
With friendly eye. Oh ! happy flower ?
Its bloom was all I could desire, Could I
Withhold from it one drop out of my life ?
No; it called my whole self unto it,
And I flowed to feed it, till it alone
Remained. It is my life, my eternity.
I cannot believe in anything beside,
No other word but his can I receive.

AM. Sister, the blood-stained road to Calvary
Thy Master trod. He beckons thee to come,
The opportunity to save thy soul.
MAR. Another has my soul in his keeping.
AM. Blaspheme thou not. Did God give man a soul
That he could play with like a bawble ?
Thy soul cannot be given to any in this world.
He to whom thou wouldst bequeath thy soul,
Would have cast it aside as easily
As he hath thee.
MAR. Cast me aside ! Oh ! Father !
Were that true, death would have come to me
In pity. My king loves me. More than senses
Love tells when love responds.
AM. Still obdurate;
But heaven will bend if thou canst suppliant be.
Hast thou no loved one who has left this world ?

Is there no saint whom thou wouldst pray to meet ?
Dost thou not long to look on Heaven's Queen ?
And hear the voice of Him who saved the world ?

MAR. To be with these, and to be honored by them
Through great eternities, I could abjure all hope,
If I might see my king once more. Louis !
Louis ! oh ! would he come ! He will come.
But if I cannot see him, I will be content
To give my every power to thought of him.
I'll live until I see him, the why of life, —
I am happy in the thought.

AM. It grieves me, child,
To see thee led thus far astray. I know
Thou wilt repent, but thy time is short.
I will leave thee now, and the sisters will come,
And they may show thee better than I
The way to God; and those will come who think

They have known love like thine. Those minister
To us best, who have known like affliction.
I will come to thee again, if God permit.
Call for me, sister. Be it day or night,
It matters not the hour thou shalt call.
I am not better than my Lord, and he
Cared not how heavy were his bruised feet,
How weary was his heart with others' sin,
He knew not rest while he could save a soul.
Farewell. Thou art so sick, so very sick,
I almost fear to leave thee. Farewell.

MAR. Farewell. [*Exit* AMBROSE.]

Still I believe; I hope; I pray; I plead;
But for one thing and that one thing must be.
I feel, at last, the surcease of my wave of love.
My king's last message seemed to ripple tidings
Of his long-waited coming. He used those terms,
Those sweet endearing names of our first love,

He called me by my second name, Angelique,
And I could hear him speak again the word,
And smile, and tell me how appropriate
The name was. [*Enter* SISTER FELICE.]

FEL. (Pausing at the door to cross herself.)
Holy mother, save her soul!
Wilt thou allow me, sister, a few words?

MAR. Yes, if they be of love.

FEL. [*aside*] I must not weaken.
[*to Mar*] There was a time, 'twas but three years ago,
I knew a man. He told me in words and sighs;
In kisses, tears, and smiles, that I alone
Could keep the jewels of his loving heart.
Ah! would I take them!— constancy, true faith,
Honor, and zeal, he swore the strands on which
His pearls of love were strung. If I'd not take,
Then I would rend the strands, and sever life.

Oh ! trustful love ! poor trustful love ! oh ! love,
That could not doubt, nor could withhold itself
From ought he asked. I almost gave up God,
For he would tell our love was God. I leaned
One soft spring evening on his manly breast;
The breeze fanned gently the arbor where we sat;
The cloudy lilacs, deep-toned hyacinths,
And virgin lilies, sweetened all our fears
Till they were not; night's jewels made complete
Our diadem of joy. Asudden ! a sound !
A foot-fall broke the sacred stillness,
A woman stood before us with a child.
I looked upon the woman and the child.
No words were spoken.
I broke away, but moaning fled afar.
I felt the while his spider's coil drawing;
I thought I could not loose the threads. I wailed.

They drew me back, yet not quite back. The threads
Of love, one day, seemed turned to chains of death.
All lost, I cried to our blest Lady of Heaven,
The cry of despair, of utter hopeless despair.
She heard me, and I gave myself to Her,
And to Her blessed Son. There is happiness,
Dear Sister; seek and find, what I have sought
And found.

MAR. You loved, you say, yet could find happiness
In something which took it from you. Is't love,
When we can let it go? Had you e'er known,
E'er felt the soulful, heart-full, life-giving, yet
Life-taking power, you would never give it up.
Was't love that pressed you on to shades of death,

You could not fear, if you were in its life.
'Twas something weaker, for it does not die.

FEL. I did not give up love.

MAR. Then speak, speak on.
I would know of it. I thought you had done speaking.
So you revert, and see that love was all, —
That nothing could replace it.

FEL. Worldly love
Is pale. I've found a love far better than man's love,
Which bears me up. Man changes. The Trinity,
The saints, the hosts of heaven rest the same.
A constant goal alone can hold a constant love.
I wish no more to feel it of this world;
My Lady and Her Son are all I seek;
I love and honor them.

MAR. You mean it not;
Has ever the great Seine turned from its course ?
And is the greater flood of love less constant ?
You spoke with tenderness of one happy eve;

I thought I heard true music in your voice;
Your tone unconsciously caressed the words;
And you then seemed to sink away and love
Stood in your place. The vine-clad arbor called,
The spring flowers touched your unresisting sense,
And you again were in your lover's arms.
There you would be. If you should hear him call,
Would you not flee this place? His accents sweet
And tender would make your vows forgotten, vain;
Yes, should he say, sweet-heart, I need your love,
I sigh for you, my love, with weary heart,
Let me know rest with thee in peace and safety,
Only one answer could you bear to make.

FEL. Oh! no! I would not heed,—but he'll not call.
I know he did not love me. I would not

That he should call. Oh ! temptation !
Wicked temptation ! He's engulfed in sin,
And he would draw me to the dreadful sea,
And then the cruel waves would come,—
his words
Would swamp my good intent. My soul is
safe.
Why should I think of the cruel ocean—
From which I have been saved ? Holy
mother!
Keep it back; keep him back. Help to resist.
I fear.—Have my penances been for naught?
Sister, those stronger than I should speak
to thee.
The power in heaven is great, is infinite.
Do not condemn or judge God's power by me.
I would relinquish silly worldly things,—
Renounce each one,—I thought I had—to
God.
No; I do not love that man. I would not go
To him, if he should—farewell; think of the
Christ,
Not mortal; hark to him, and let him speak.
(*Exit* FELICE)

MAR. Would I speak falsely of my love, and say
It is not, when it is? I'll be sincere
To it, and breathe it with my latest breath,
For I know it is more than my life itself.
I doubt my lover? Oh! the strangler comes!
Oh! back! pray, back! and grant me one day more!
Then take my pale throat unresisting
To thy cold and bony fingers. One day more!
Love wills! Thou must. No; blandly mocking face,
I do not fear thee. Bloodless lips, sightless eyes,
I am not afraid. Blanched jaws!
Senseless flesh of graves! I ask not for peace.
I live in torment, with torment increasing
For future hope, if I may only live.
Good heart! you'll not fail me. Beat for the love

That thou wilt know; beat for the love that throbs
For thee in thy king's breast. Send blood in flames
To burn the strangler's grip. Aeneas returns.
He comes tomorrow. Beat, throb high, for him,
Mount that thy fire may light his way and shame
The sun before his lover's eyes. He comes.
(*Enter* SISTER LAURA).

LAURA. Child, thou wilt hear me now? I fear that I
May never again see thee.

MAR. I am not dying:
You think that death approaches; the heart is hid.
My heart is nearing birth with great travail,
Which racks my body, and makes me seem weak.
They've said a month each day would be my last.

Yet, I live on.

LAU. Poor child, thou liv'st, and how?
The good physician marvels as, each day,
He sees thou art not gone. He fears each hour.
The power was not his to keep thee here.
The Great Physician looks upon thee still
With pity manifest. He knows thy trials,
And thy temptations; and has rendered thee
Accordingly. Give him the praise for life.

MAR. I sure will see my king once more.

LAU. How can one so faithless hold God's favor?

MAR. Faithless! I have faith beyond all men.

LAU. But faith is what? Embruted man. Turn it
To God, and thou wilt find what pure love is.
I once thought that man's love commanded faith,
Or what man would call love, fair lyric fiend,
Which elves into our truest selves, and filches,
To our embasement, the good hindering.

Its perjurious voice seductive, vile, conjuring
The semblances of sacred forms to hide the sepulchres
Most vile with reeking dead. The portal lamp
Is dazzling bright above a jewelled door;
The silly victim's brain begins to burn
As nearer he approaches it, and he, —

MAR. [*interrupting*] Oh! sister, thou saidst that love was known to thee,
Speak to me then of that alone;
Speak of it tenderly as of hope's flower;
Speak of it sympathetically;
Tell of it as of a living soul, an ardent flame,
Or as it used to seem to you. Speak not
Of love with pondering consideration.
Emotions are the truest part of us; —
Love comes from them, or, — no; love rules them,
And they love's subjects, waiting on his word,
Responding to his summons to put reason down;

To fling the gauntlet. Would one harm their lord,
Their eagre billows up, and casts ashore
The cunning boats which evil doubt would launch.

LAU. How canst thou upon such febrile folly
Launch all thy hopes, fatuous deluded child.
Thou callest the hideous tongues of lowest flame
As glows which ever rule the world.

MAR. But thou, —
Thou, as well as I, may know deception?
And I would say thou speakest false, for I
Know what I trust is love, the greatest truth.

LAU. Oft that
Which seems to us most true is really that
Which is most false. I see there is some power
Most black, most wicked, turning the colors of day
Before thine eyes, making thee see where truth
Is not. Thy passion seems pure, 'tis feculent.

And 't is the waste, the dregs of life on which
Thou fixest gaze with so great constancy.
Consider for a moment how high is the love
That loves the great unseen, serving it,
Hoping some day to live within its presence.
Sister, a spell is coming over thee. Thine eyes
Have look unnatural. I call a priest.

MAR. No; Sister Laura. No. My time's not come.

LAU. Then, the doctor ?

MAR. No; my ailment is my own.
I brought it on myself. I would no cure,
For I might lose in it more than my life.
Oh ! he must come ! Oh ! how long I have waited !
Were his heart of marble, the bleeding tears
Which I have shed would melt it to humanity.

LAU. [*aside, withdrawing*] Never has such as she entered these walls;
Never a soul so trustful in a man.
May God forgive her. I condemn her way:—

It is most sinful clinging to the world.
And loving carnal things. But so much love!
Would it were turned aright to things of heaven! [*Exit* LAURA.]

MAR. Am I becoming weaker, nearer death?
They seem to gaze on me with blank-eyed fear,
Whenever they turn not their eyes away.
Am I grown frightful, hideous? My king
Will see me just the same, his statue,
Every line as exquisite as 't was.
I care not how my eyes are sunken,
The light of love will make them beautiful
For him. When he shall come, — Oh! he will come, —
Have I struggled, do I struggle for naught!
Death's near. Yes, 't is death. Good faith, be strong.
A little longer, blessed hope, hold fast.
I would write a last appeal today,
Would some only help me! I'm so tired
For Louis' arms, so thirsty for a tear
Of his. [*Enter* A NUN.]

NUN. Sister Celeste is come and sends
Inquiry if you wish her.
MAR. LaValiere ?
She whom my king onced loved, perhaps yet not
As he loved me.
NUN. The veil has passed between;
She thinks no longer of the hopeless past.
She's travelled far with thought of helping thee;
She bade me tell thee she has come to aid
In any way.
MAR. Oh ! I need her help ! Send her.
[*Exit* NUN.]
Yes; I am weaker. I am asking aid.
She must be good. I sometimes wish I might
Be good and happy in ideals. But oh !
I love; I love; Can she be as she seems;
Content, or is she cloaking her bruised heart ?
How can a woman change her soulful love :
Oh ! God ! I would not part the ties now bound;

I cannot but love my king.

[*Enter* LAVALIERE, SISTER CELESTE.]

Thou art a Christian;
I could not have sought thee out as thou hast me.
You have known the love of Louis.

CEL. Of that
Concern is far removed from me. I look
Upon another king, another realm.
I serve the heart that broke with love for me;
I long to pour my love in gratitude
And praise to Him, heaven's King.

MAR. How could you leave
Whom you once loved? What led?—ah! what could lead?

CEL. You know my life at court; you know my fall
Into displeasure.—

MAR. You could not renounce,
As they would tell, or you could not have lived.
You could not believe no more love's tide
Would flow to you, because it once had ebbed.

CEL. I care not how the tale is told. I think
Not of the world, for the nail-pierced hand led me
To the realm where the spirit comes to life;
And once we know the spirit life, our love
No longer roves to earthly things. It leads
Me still. I am satisfied.
MAR. Wilt thou not try
To think of earth-blown love, and help me write
A last appeal to him, my king? Say, yes,
Sweet sister; he must come before I die,
And I know my death is coming soon.
Thou wilt forgive my weak request,
And sympathy wilt add for my one wish,—
The only great desire I have ever known.
Yes; thou'lt forgive me what I ask? Say aye.
CEL. Lay thy head upon thy pillow, and take some rest.
Dear child, I pity thee and love thee.
I scarcely know the best for thy soul life.
MAR. I cannot rest, and I long not for it;

My life is gone, for that there's no regret;
But oh!— my king,—my king,— oh! God!
my king!

CEL. He shall come, child.

MAR. I know—

CEL. I will help thee write.

MAR. Sweet sister, I believe there is a God,
For I now see one of his angels.
We must not tarry in the letter's writing,
A stupor may come over me before the end;
If it shall hold me, bring me back to consciousness
By any means you can. Spare me nothing;
Beat on my fore-head; make my heart throb with blows.
Yes, we will write the letter now. Where do they keep
The fluid and the quills?

MAR. I forgot of them.
Here is the key. The drawer in the small table.
In there the treasures of my king are kept,
My great possessions,—messages from him.

In you I have a trust without a fear,
And seek your help with faith. A last appeal!
Oh! I must trust to you to lend me words.
I know that I must die, I am so weak.
A last appeal,—a single hope,—I seek
With dying breath to tell my love. No words
Will come to call my lover perfectly,
They seem so weak, those former ways of greeting.

CEL. Ah! any words from heart like thine must find
Response.

MAR. Oh! I believe; I let it speak;
Write, "Lover, who supplantest life for me,
My lover, I am waiting patiently.
Yes; you are coming to your sweet-heart, Angelique,
But hasten. Come now. Oh! why do you delay!
Oh! were it you the sick,—the sun should not move,

Till I were winging toward you swifter than
the winds.
I'd search the earth for balm to call health
back;
I'd lay my heart on yours and give it out.
All that I could I have given to you,
But sacrifice for love is happiness;
I let them take the babe from off my breast, —
My sweet frail babe! — I loved it, but for
you
I let its tender mouth be drawn away,
And closed my eyes to its appealing gaze. —
Oh! it seemed so trustful! — And my ears
I stopped, and sobbed, yet could not drown
its cry.
They told me I might live a little longer,
If I could give it up. I let go.
I loved it so; I loved you more; come, oh!
come. [*swooning.*]
Celeste, send the letter; send the letter."

CURTAIN.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE I.—*A dark dusty room.*

TIME:—*The same day, ten hours later.*

A door opens at the left. Enter NOVICE HELEN, *then* SISTER LAURA.

HEL. Yes, I was singing when we were not allowed to speak, but that Novice Ave need not have told. I can't help singing more than the crickets. And it was not talking.

LAU. Thou must learn obedience, wayward child. Well thou knewest what thy singing was.

HEL. [*half aloud*] I didn't think my voice as bad as that.

LAU. Many times we have thought to have heard thy voice, when thou wist not we were attending. But now we have a novice come among us, a good and simple and sincere soul.—

HEL. [*aside*] Good and simple, nothing worse.

LAU. A pure, sweet child, conscientious and obedient, and she would seek thy welfare, and so has told us of thy sin. Would thou wert like her.

HEL. Sister Laura, I do not feel very guilty.

LAU. The deeper then thy sin. Thy mind must be most depraved, most unworthy of this holy house. Wast thou not conscious that thou shouldst make no unnecessary sound in the hours of silence ?

HEL. No. Yes. No. For,—

LAU. I leave thee that thy silly mind become settled, and then thou mayst be prepared to meditate and pray and be forgiven.

HEL. No, Sister Laura, don't go. Please, Sister Laura, when you were a novice,—(*aside, despairingly*) she looks as if she were born a nun,—were there not among those who entered with you any who would sometimes break a rule, as I have done, yet, who you knew were good, and are today good members of your order ?

LAU. Thou seekest excuse. I will not answer thee. Thy duty, thy vows must alone be seen by thee. Thou art the most froward of all the novices of recent memory.

HEL. (*aside.*) Of recent memory. (*Nods her head knowingly.*)

LAU. Thou mayest improve with good associates. I fear not all the novices are like the gentle Ave.

HEL. [*aside*] Praise be to goodness, they are not.

LAU. Wilt thou confess the others who have broken rules? It were better that thou tell me now than I should learn from thy companions. And tell of thine own faults.

HEL. [*aside*] Sweet Ave has told all she could remember. I'm thankful her memory is simple, too. Sister Laura, I never could have time to tell all my faults. I can only confess that I am the worst offender and I have tempted all the others and been successful save with Novice Ave.

Sometime they all but she have joined with me in talk, or song, or laughter, when we were in the hours of silence. I am truly most at fault.

LAU. Too often have I seen of late thine eye with an unholy gleam. At first I took it for religious zeal, and once I thought the jewel tear-drop of contrition there had place, thou wast so solemn and so earnest at thy prayers, till a day came when I saw thee pinch the novice at thy side, while thou wast most ardently attending to the order of the service. Dost thou remember that?

HEL. [*smiling*] Yes, I remember it, but Alcee well deserved the pinching; she had prepared the vestments for the day, and poor old Pere Jean was celebrating mass with them on backwards.

LAU. [*smiles faintly, but soon resumes her severe attitude.*] Would thou observedest the spiritual thoughts and them alone!

HEL. [*aside*] Then I should be like all the

others. [*to* LAURA] I wish I could, but I'm not simple Ave.

LAU. The light coming from thine eyes at this moment has many possible meanings, as do the pretty notes that escape thy lips too often.

HEL. And you surely accept the best possible meaning. That would be just would it not, Sister Laura ?

LAU. Thou art very light-minded, all too worldly. And what is it thou singest in the hours of silence ? Profane words and music, and sometimes profane and foolish words to the glorious melodies of our hymns. We are too patient with thee, too forgiving. Too often hath thy youth been counted as excuse; our hearts have softened at thy sin as we would say, "She is only fourteen." But thou, Novice Helen, hast left the world; forget not that. Thou hast renounced it with solemn vows. When thou wast wedded to the church thou trampledst, none more

earnestly, the satin robe, which signified the world, under thy feet; thine ardor was so strong that rents were torn in it, and we could not use it for embroidering. I wonder if thou tookest it in full seriousness, if thou thoughtest of thy wedding to the church as thou shouldst.

HEL. I was earnest then, believe me, Sister Laura.

LAU. God grant thou wert. Then think a while upon these vows and of thy daily sin in breaking them each day. [*She walks toward the door, Helen follows her with beseeching eyes.*] Thou needest not entreat. The punishment is light enough.

HEL. But the room is dark.

LAU. It is good for meditation. Speak no more. [*Passes out and bolts the door.*]

HEL. Gentle Ave! Sweet Ave! Conscientious Ave! Simple Ave! She's no better than the rest of us, only she doesn't know how to do anything but what she is told. We had some fun with her the first night

she came. Dear Matilde was with us then, and she and I planned it, but the others joined in the frolic. The way we made the simple Ave prostrate herself at every picture and beat her head before each altar! And the trip we took her through the grave-yard on that dark night and hid behind the grave-stones and made her ask questions of the saints, and then we answered her! Oh! that penance we told her she must submit to:—while she said her rosary we dropped cold, cold water down her back. I'm glad we did it, but I think that she's found it out somehow and so become so pious. Oh! sweet Matilde! I wish she were here now. She was good and pure and faithful at devotion, but her face wasn't always like an Italian angel's on an altar cloth. There was none better than she in spirit. But she could not stand the life. Oh! how sick she was, and how reluctant she was to go. I wanted almost

to leave when she went. Oh! Matilde! I can't stay here any longer. I'm going to cry and cry and cry until I'm sick and pale, and they say I must go. (*She sinks on floor and mopes a little, then jumps up quickly to her feet.*) No. I'm not going to cry; they might come in and rejoice at what they would think was penitence brought on by their punishment. I shall not have my means of penitence dictated to me. I'm going to show them that I don't mind being locked up alone in the dark, but I do. I wonder what there is in this place. I never remember that any of the naughty novices were locked in here before; prayers are our usual penance,—but they don't know that I don't mind praying before the beautiful altars. I'm going to open the shutters of that window if I can. (*Goes over to a window at the rear of stage and begins to shake the shutters.*] This is dustier than a saint's tomb. Oh! wouldn't the meek Ave be frightened here. She's

good because she's a coward. But I'll make her sin. (*From the vigorous shaking of Helen the shutters suddenly fly back and almost knock Helen over. She laughs at this, collecting herself.*) The little light that comes through this dirty old window won't disturb my meditations, I guess. I wonder if there is anyihing around that might. Probably an old prayer-book. Oh ! there's surely something good in that big chest. I hope it isn't full of sermons; if it is, I'm afraid I'll say something very sinful. It seems cleaner than the rest of the room, and it will open. Good ! [*opens the chest delves into it, and sings once or twice*]

"Oh ! I'm a wicked little nun,
But then a nun must have a run,
So I have just begun to have some fun."

[*as she draws a magnificent blue gown out of the chest.*] Oh ! this is wonderful. I didn't know that fairy godmothers ever visited convents. Isn't it the most beautiful

thing in the world. I like miracles like this. It must belong to some queen or duchess. How did it come here? Whom would they allow to bring it in? I never saw anything like it, only once when I was in Paris and saw the queen driving. But her gown was not so magnificent. Such color! Such richness! And the lace so fine. No nun in our convent could ever make it without losing her sight. Perhaps it is a saint's and so has lasted centuries. I wish it might last forever, but I don't believe it is a saint's. It looks too good for a saint's. Oh! wicked mirror! [*She brings forth a mirror.*] You say to me, "My little friend, the habit of a novice is not just what you need to make prettiest. I know it is wicked, but I'm so bad anyway, and I'll confess it all with tears. [*She puts the dress up in front of her, then places it carefully back into the trunk. She takes hold of the trunk-lid, and remains doubting and fearing a few moments.*] It would be terrible,

but it will do no harm. I can't help it. I will be so careful, and,—I must put it on. Someone might come. No; they will leave me here for a long while, I provoked them so. What a charming meditation. Ah! Ah! Ah! (*Throws back the lid quickly, dances out of her novice-costume and removes her head-dress. With these she dusts the floor, then shakes them, and lays them on floor under her feet spread out as much as possible. Finally she puts the gown on, singing gaily*)

"Oh I'm a wicked little nun," etc.

(*The dress on, she looks at herself roguishly in the mirror.*) Eh! You are too pretty to make a good nun. I wish Matilde were here. Wouldn't we have a beautiful scene. I never knew before how different clothes can make you feel. I am independent now of everything, the convent, the nation, and the king. (*Sings.*)

Je suis une damoiselle
Aimable et tres belle;
Jesuis comme une renne,
Puis tremblez a ma haine.

Ah ! Mon ame ! Quel heureux !
Galant, tiens du coeur
D'etre un courageux
Voleur et tu es deux.

[*Enter* SISTER FELICE.] Oh ! Holy Virgin ! [*She weeps.*]

HEL. [*Turns expecting severest censure, and stands confused at the tears of* FELICE.] Oh ! Sister Felice ! is my soul lost, because of my sin ? Can I never be forgiven ?

FEL. Poor child, thou canst not understand.

HEL. I know I am very bad. If you would only pray for me, I might be better.

FEL. Yes, I will pray for thee, but child, there is one who needs all our prayers at this moment. Her body is dying, and with her body—Oh ! Blessed Mother !—her soul; yes,—I fear,—her soul.

HEL. Is she worse than I ? Who is she ?

FEL. The one whose gown thou wearest, —

HEL. Is this her gown ?

FEL. Yes, she sent me for it, and her voice was that of one who has left the world, but for whom the next hath no place. Oh ! my heart is torn for that dying girl.

HEL. Oh ! heavens ! is someone dying, really dying ? And I have her gown on ? Can I do anything ? Oh ! she cannot be dying ! Something would save her !

[*Enter* SISTER LAURA.]

LAU. [*sternly.*] Do I see aright ? And thou, Sister Felice, what may thy excuse be ? Thy fault is not light. Thy weakness is amazing. Must the request of the dying wait while thou lookest with tears upon this silly child ? Novice, thy lesson must be taught. Come into the presence of one dying because of vanity like thine. I will take thee as thou art in the robe she has requested.

HEL. Oh ! don't, kind Sister Laura. It

must be awful to be dying. Oh! I will be so good, keep every rule, be as meek as Ave, only don't make me go to her in her gown. Pity me, kind Sister Laura. Oh! Sister Felice, don't let her make me go.

LAU. (*Motions towards* SISTER FELICE *to be silent.*) Come. (*Stronger and firmer to Helen.*) Come. If it be thine own death thou shalt come.

CURTAIN.

SCENE TWO.—*Same as in Act I. De Fontange is alone.*

LAU. He comes: two words: but death is stopped by them.
Oh! glorious news! How I have longed for you!
How I have lived for you! He comes; he comes;

My king, he comes. When heard I the words first?
Well I remember. Little more than a year ago
When I was waiting to have audience
With him. I held his flowers in my hand,
I wore the gown that he had chosen me,
And the simple string of uncut pearls.
Since then earth's loveliest flowers have been mine,
Gowns most gorgeous, jewels most wonderous,
But sweetest memories still twine about
The simpler things which he sent me first.
In the little ante-room I waited long,—
How slow the moments passed! Assembled there
Were those a month before had made me gaze
With ravished and admiring jealous eyes.
All nobles and of great renown and fame,—
Yet I could not attend their words nor speak.
How misty, vague, unreal, the dazzle seemed,

The while I kept repeating, "Will he come?"
How my head grew hot, I seemed to sway;
The mirrors made me think it was a dream,
As I would smile in them or raise my hand
Toward them to see if I were still awake.
At last when moments had grown hours and days
The words came from I knew not, cared not whom,
"He comes;" and I felt it was my royal lord.
My love responded even before he came
Where I could see him. And it drove out fears
And made my blood flow rich and full. I felt
Such perfect ecstasy, such happiness,
That all confusion sparkled like the dew
Of morning in the glorious sun-light.
He called all radiant colors of my soul
With his kind ray. I knew that love was king.
He comes, my king! Thank God! once more to live

By glancing in my lover's eye, and hearing
His sweet tones, like notes from summer's harp,
Tuned by the zephyrs, having each the beauty
Of swaying branches, flowers, each astir
With song of bird, or soothing hum of bee.
[*Enter* NOVICE HELEN *and* LAURA.]

LAU. [*to* HELEN.] Confess thy sin, Helen, and crave pardon.

HEL. [*to* LAURA.] Oh! I am sorry for it all, but speak
I can't. [*Seeing Laura unmoved, she throws herself at the feet of De Fontange.*] Forgive me, noble lady, forgive!
I cannot bear to look into thy face
And tell my sin most horrible. Forgive!
I did not think it harm. I knew not what I did. [*Exit* LAURA.]

MAR. Sweet child, what hast thou done to me!
No wrong. Thy voice brings back a memory

Of girlhood days, and thoughts of happy time,
But not as happy as a human knows,
For a woman whom love makes a woman
Alone has happiness that is complete.
I would not give one moment of that love
For blind eternity. My lover, thine arm
About me once again, let all of hell,
The demons and the damned lance white-heat flames,
The closer will I cling and cry, "I love; I love."
Kind tender Louis, thou art coming soon,
And I shall hear thee tell again they love.
I heed not all the taunting of the world;
They know not what they say, not knowing love.
And thy gown I wear, but where is it ?

HEL. Good lady, I love thee, but I have sinned.
Oh ! God ! I would not had I only known.
I found thy wonderous gown by chance and tried

It on most carefully. I have it now.
I never felt a weight of sin so fierce!
Tell them to treat me harshly as they will;
I cannot hope that thou wilt grant me pardon!

MAR. Oh! gentle maid, weep not. No fault is thine.
None has ever felt desire strong as mine
To hold the awful enemy away
Till I should see my king once more. And now
He comes today. Forgive? Most willingly.
Ah! thou art young and fair. The gown doth well
Become thee, and it shall be thine when I
Am gone tomorrow, and he shall have come.

CURTAIN.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE :—*Same as in Act I.* TIME:—*An hour later.*

MARIE DE FONTANGE. Oh! moments! moments! stolen moments from death!
I know you, death, how near you are to me.
Be stayed; more horrible the hereafter for my theft;
I care not. Only till my king shall come
I will stay thee. Ye bleeding moments! wrestle
For your life; on you are not gone; arise;
'Tis nothing that thine eyes are bloodshot red;
Another struggle for the hair's-breadth space
And thrust thyself, a spear gleam, 'gainst the foe
Who would advance. Oh! moment, stronger than
The last! Victory! Fight! A soul thy stake!
A soul,—a soul of flesh, who would be flesh.

Oh! rapturous embrace with kiss of love!
Oh! summer's breath laden with rose's scent!
Oh! sea of emerald and boat of pearl!
Oh! azure sky with gentle waves of foam!
Oh! birds of morn! Oh! cricket's hum at noon.
And glorious glare of splendid blazing gold,
As all turns gem beneath thy royal ray.
Oh! crimson glow 'mid purple shrouded clouds,
And whiffs of pink, smiles of the day to night!
Oh! dark and wonderous shades for lovers made,
And myriad worlds alight for only them!

[*Enter* LAVALIERE, CELESTE.]

CEL. Can I assist thee further?

MAR. Kind Celeste!
The string of uncut pearls, and that the last.
Under the pillow, the farther one. Thanks,
Kind Sister. Tell me, do I seem renewed?
You answer not?

CEL. The robe is beautiful;

The blue was made just for thy hair, I think.

MAR. My hair looks well. The pain it cost to pile
The locks back is forgotten.—
It seemed each hair a livid burning nerve,
Yet 'tis for him. It is his favorite way.
He liked it this way best, and it is fair?
And the first gifts I wear; in these he saw
Me first. He'll see me just the same as when
At court with serving train I came. My eyes,
They are not glowing, but when he shall come,
They sure will claim the fairest radiance.
My hands,—oh! poor thin hands! They are not fair,
But he will love them as the last pale rose.
And features gaunt and lines so deep and dark;
Yet he will not despise them. Can you bring

The powder and the rouge ?

CEL. I have them here,
Concealed beneath my robe.

MAR. Let me kiss thee.

CEL. No; it were a sin; and little have I done
For thee.

MAR. Then let me take thy hand. Forgive!
(*kisses it.*)

CEL. Poor heart! its tears might bathe the heavenly feet.

MAR. No; no. (*Sorrowfully—taking up the powder puff.*) How bad the powder acts, or fault
Is in the face. Yes, there's the fault. Oh! lines!
You stay the same or worse. You, Celeste,
Will you only try ? Perhaps, I am too weak.
I wanted to do all I could myself,
For it will be my only sacrifice,—
My last.

CEL. Yes, let me try, though years are dim
And distant when I held those to my face.
(*takes the puffs and cloths.*)

MAR. (*After a few moments.*) 'T is useless;
worse than useless. Try the rouge.
(*a pause.*)
That is worse, but my hair is beautiful,
You said it was, and you would not speak
false.

CEL. Oh! yes; it is a radiant glory. Gem
Or diadem were no adornment there.

MAR. Oh! good Celeste! I promise you one
thing,
And I remmeber it. I will see the priest,
Kind Father Ambrose, and confess, in full
confess.

CEL. I knew thy promise good when thou
Didst make it me. Oh! tell the father all.
Thou must be saved. As in thy love with him
Be strong. I go to call him; then to pray.
I pray for thee all day and all night. I
pray,
Nor food I eat, nor sleep. God bless thee
now;
Farewell.

MAR. Farewell, most noble sister-friend.
(*Exit* CELESTE.)

MAR. She goes to pray for me? I wait for him.
The priest? No; but for him, I wait; I pray.
Must she not love him yet? No; she does not.
Love she has conquered. God has all her soul.
Once when he came to her, she had returned,
But when again she entered into the vale,
She entered for her life. Never was she
As I. Oh! love! forever be but mine,
And I am thine, forever, love. Oh! flame!
Consume me, and I call thy dust and smoke
And ashes blessedness. Glow warmest red
Within my brain, my heart, my soul. Thou may'st.
I promised her to see the priest. The good
She seeks, as does the father, I fathom not.
I would prepare for Father Ambrose, but to pray,—
To pray,—for my own soul, to pray to God.
I pray to live, and my prayer is whole,
And every power in me comes to plead,

To live! To live. Oh! God! one hour more,
Throughout the day, oh! God! to live! to live!
(*Enter* FATHER AMBROSE.)

AM. Thou callest for me?

MAR. Father, so you come.

AM. Yes, happy at thy call.

MAR. I would confess,
And yet I have to give my every force
In strife to keep alive.

AM. For what avail?
Is death so terrible to thee? Then seek
The only one who hath conquered of himself
The dread enemy, who can only make
Thy resurrection sure in heaven.

MAR. 'Tis death,
Not the hereafter that I fear. Oh! dread
Of death before I see my king again once more.
It shakes my soul as earth-quakes shock, and chains
Of lightning quick succeeding, twist, and dart,
And warp, and burn, and pierce, and rage, and ring

Unearthly discords, clanging, screaching.
Oh! damned
Of all the ages, worse my state.
AM. Dear child,
Be still, and let us seek for peace and it
Will come. Look only to the source of peace,
The Virgin, and her Son.
MAR. Father, I seek
To live. I go to Heaven or Hell for aid.
AM. 'T is Heaven will aid through Heaven's
Queen. Then seek
Aright.
MAR. I seek. I will be calm. One day
A lady of the court spoke thus of me,
"Surely a person never lived,
Who was so happy and yet so unhappy."
I laughed full gay when someone told the
words
To me, but now I know that they are true.
AM. But thou wast happy when thy life was
good.
MAR. No; I was happy when my king was
near.

AM. My child, what then of years before you knew
The court ?
MAR. Oh ! they were nothing. Happiness Was then unknown.
AM. The days of childhood, simple
Sweet days of perfect joy ! To me
They were life's fondest moments.
Remember how the Master said, "Except
As little children ye become, ye shall
In no wise enter Heaven." Then is our life—
Oh ! even as the violets we cull
'Mid song and laughter. Oh ! perfect hours!
For we are full content, and only wish
In play. Think of these moments of thy youth.
MAR. Youth and childhood, distant is the time,
Though I can count my years only eighteen.
When I was very young, maybe, six or eight,
I played like other children, careless, free,
Among the birds and flowers and grasses oft,

I never thought of being happy then,
I played till I was tired, and that was all.
AM. You have forgotten of the church. You went
To church ?
MAR. Yes.
AM. When were you confirmed ?
MAR. Too late, father.
AM. I do not understand.
My child, too late?
MAR. Yes, I was ten.
AM. Too late,
She says, and only ten.
MAR. Yes, for at ten
I was vain. My beauty was my only thought.
The turn of a wrist, a finger's move, was more
To me than any prayer I read. I thought
Throughout the confirmation of how I looked,
And of the admiration of the world;
And even when the archbishop the cross
Imprinted, I thought of how the cross of oil

Became my beauty and decided poor,
Indeed, and within were a jewelled ornament
To claim a place upon my forehead.

AM. Oh! Heavens!

MAR. Ah! was it not too late? Yes, late; too late.

AM. How could it be?

MAR. It was my life. All I
Was taught after my eighth birthday had passed
Was grace and beauty that I might attract
A nobleman some day, and riches bring
And glory on my name and family.
My single subject, single lesson, through the years
Was to be beautiful in every look
And move. My life has been a strife for this.
Death sounding makes me see as 't is the room
From which I soon depart, its contents vain.

AM. Thou hast attended church?

MAR. Yes, but never worshipped.

AM. The power of the church thou knowest; thou faith
Wilt add, and it will comfort thee, and give
Thee needed strength for the journey dark and lone.
It is a never-failing aid. The tomb
Confounds it not; it triumphs over all. (*He goes over to a large crucifix on the wall, blesses himself, then takes the crucifix down and places it in Marie's hands.*)
Trust the blessed Saviour, see his pierced hands
And feet, his thorn-crowned brow, his riven side.
The bleeding flow can cover all thy sins.

MAR. I try. Blest Mother of God, plead with thy Son.
Oh! wicked, vile am I, and full of sin,—
(*Enter a messenger: to the messenger.*) Speak
is he come here yet?

MESS. He comes.

(*Marie lets the crucifix fall and it breaks on the floor.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE :—*Same as in Act I.* TIME:—*An hour later.*

LOUIS. [*meditating*] The mystic madness of the dream, the dream—
I dare not speak its name. Too soon 't will come:
Never to wake again; yet it must be,
For tombs are speechless and pale lips of graves
Are dumb. What is it? What am I? A soul?
And what is it which passes out of me?
I live, and it will live somehow, somewhere.
Can it dissolve and melt into nothingness?
Or can it feel itself as here? Does it
Take to the air or seek the sea or go,
Go out and that is all as of the wind?
Can it possess the crumbling flesh alone,
And can it cling to that which falls to dust?

Is that its heritage ? Is it of life ?
It may be it has larger life and hope, —
It may then know more that all we know as life ?
It cannot be. [*Looks toward* MARIE] Oh ! God ! 'T is death; death.

MAR. Come nearer king and lover, it is I.

LOU. [*aside*] Am I a king and do I tremble ? Fear,
Is it a royal attribute ? To answer her
All fails; to answer her I have despised
As weakest of our race, of frailest mind,
Without a will. [*He approaches her.*]

MAR. Oh ! speak once more of love
With rapturous voice, and kiss me once again.
Oh ! happiness of first-born love; oh ! smile
Of all the seasons beaming one, again
To see thy face. [*She reaches out a hand; he kisses it.*] Oh ! treasure of my soul !
The night is gone ! Come, let us climb the hill
To greet the rising sun with laughter and song.

Love is a child, and children nothing fear.
This is the spot on the bank beneath this tree.
Come, let us sing, and love, and live, and love!

LOU. [*half aloud*] She faces it with love upon her lips.

MAR. I see you only, other thought is not.
Yes, love upon my lips, for I am happy.
'T is perfect joy.

LOU. Poor child! Ah! curse me with latest breath.
Why these words, my kind master? You are here;
You were so good to grant my simple request,
So good,—I always think of you as good.
Come, whisper to me the old words so sweet,
And for this hour we live in former scenes;
Repeat the words of that inclement day,
When you were sheltering me with your plumed hat.
Be not sad. I am happy.

LOU. [*aside*] To answer !
How horrible the torment even here !
MAR. I wait, my lover. Shall I tell them over ?
I know them as the lark its song. How often
They have been on my lips and in my heart,
As I have tried to voice them.
LOU. Poor, dear child,
Forgive me.
MAR. Yes, though what to be forgiven ?
Now the song.
LOU. "Hair of the comet combed by the sun,
Depths of the blue of even,
Passionate red, and glow of the stars,
Goddess,—"
Oh ! ask me not
For more in such an hour. You are—
MAR. Happy, aye.
LOU. Angelique, hast thou nothing to ask of me ?
YES. Yes, everything except myself. You keep

My soul, 't is my bequest, 't is all I have;
You keep it, lover.

LOU. Sweet-heart, keep thy soul?
Thou meanest thy soul!

MAR. Aye.

LOU. [*aside*] Oh! God! am I
Turned fiend to filch men's souls? [*to* MAR.]
Thy thought is wild.

MAR. So is my love. Wild! Ah! 't is the word! My love
Is as the lion wild, as the savage wild,
And as the partridge wild, as the thyme wild.
We have an hour for wild and glorious love.
Oh! rapturous embrace and kiss of love.
Oh! summer's breath laden with rose's scent.
Oh! sea of emerald and boat of pearl.
Oh! azure sky with gentle waves of foam.
Oh! birds of morn! Oh! crickets' hum at noon!
And glorious glare of splendid blazing gold,
As all turns gem beneath thy royal ray.

Oh! crimson glow 'mid purple deepening clouds,
And whiffs of pink, smiles of the day to night.
Oh! dark and wonderous shades for lovers made,
And myriad worlds alight for only them.

LOU. Her mind is wandering. So near to death
Without a fear! Her mind is gone.

MAR. Good heart,
Thou must not fail me now. Beat for the love
That thou wilt know; beat for the love that throbs
For thee in thy king's breast. Send blood in flames
To burn the strangler's grip. Aeneas returns!
He comes to-morrow; throb high for him;
Mount that thy fire may light his way and shame
The sun before his lover's eye. He comes!

Oh! Louis! speak of love! never enough!

LOU. She thinks not what she says. A frame!
Vain empty frame which love doth haunt.

MAR. No word to me?
What were you saying? Have you been here long?
I have been sick. How long I waited you!
You could not come before. You loved me?
You loved the baby? I loved it, but for you
I let them draw its tender mouth away,
And closed my eyes to its appealing gaze.
But oh! it seemed so trustful. And my ears
I stopped, and sobbed, yet could not drown its cry.
They told me I might live a little longer,
If I could give it up. I let it go.
Oh! my sweet babe! But I loved you more.
You have come, oh! you have come. I lean
Oh! lover, on thine arm. Oh! happy time,
Though death must come.

LOU. Not death, but love and life.

MAR. It were too full. Love for a moment, love!

I own it, and I die content.

LOU. No thought
Of life to come.

MAR. This moment is enough.

LOU. I call a priest.

MAR. The God of love is here.

LOU. Pray! let me call! The church should be here this hour.

MAR. Oh! leave me not, for then thou hastenest death;
But love and thought of it will keep me here;
Thou lovedst me more than all and love me still
The same. 'T was not the pomp and luxury,
The riches of the palace and the power,
The titles and the adoring multitudes;
I had a pride in them which I now hate.
My only claim, my only wish is you.
Alway thy love my great desire, but now
'T is all: no thought save of thy love; no word
But love and thee.

LOU. Oh! tell me some request;

Speak as you care for me.

MAR. Ask forgiveness
From those whom I have wronged and pay my debts.

LOU. But for thyself ?

MAR. Remember me sometime,
And when thou takest from thy breast a flower,
Its head drooping, but sweetness rare exhaling,
Breathe in its dying fragrance full and deep,
And kiss its grateful leaves with thought of me.

LOU. Whence sprung this love? I promise all and more.
Ah ! what could pay for love like thine ?

MAR. Thy love.
A light is bursting through the window now;
'Tis dazzling, a new light. Tired ! Happy !
What is approaching ? (*She starts up, then falls back.*)

LOU. (*Bending toward her.*) Silent; yet she breathes.

A priest must come. To die without a hope.
'T is strange no priest is here.

MAR. (*Reviving.*) I have profaned
The church. Call not a priest. None will answer.

LOU. In such an hour the church cannot refuse thee.

MAR. Oh! leave me not to call. 'T will not avail.

LOU. The thief upon the cross the Lord forgave.

MAR. I am the other thief. I reviled the Christ.
Behold the broken crucifix. When I
Heard you come, I threw it from me.

LOU. Great God!
My soul is lost, as I thy cause of sin.
Oh! pray, and clasp the crucifix about my neck.
We cry to God, to Mary, and to Christ.
For thy soul, pray; pray!

MAR. Sweetest pledge of love,
Thou prayest for me.

LOU. Thou must join the prayer.
MAR. My prayer is answered as I see thy love.
LOU. My love. Ah! could it save thy soul?
MAR. The hope
Hath bent the back of death and made death's steps
Creep slow. What may not then the love achieve?
LOU. What words to comfort thee!
MAR. The words which are
The same forever, I love you.
LOU. I love you,
As I hate myself I love you, Angelique.
MAR. 'T is growing dark, but soft the night and bright
The stars, the memories of love and thee.
(*She falls limp. He kneels beside her.*)
LOU. Oh! leave me not; a farewell word, a kiss.
My love, my duchess, Marie, Angelique.
MAR. (*Half opening her eyes.*) I die happy; my king weeps for me.

FINAL CURTAIN.

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